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AUTHOR Johnston, Peter; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Thirty classroom teachers, 19 reading teachers, 33 students, and 13 supervisors were interviewed in a study to gather information concerning the degree of congruence that exists in the instruction provided during core curriculum reading instruction and compensatory reading instruction. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that addressed various aspects of classroom and remedial reading programs. The data indicated a full range of contrasts and a frequent lack of congruence between the regular class and remedial class settings. There was also a lack of awareness of many teachers about the materials that the child was working with in the other instructional setting. The students' comments tended to reflect a lack of awareness of the purpose of the activities in which they were required to participate. It was also found that student-teacher dyads and teacher-teacher dyads showed considerable disagreement on certain information. Children's perceptions of what they spent the most time doing often differed considerably from what their teachers perceived. The children noted more time on workbooks or worksheets, whereas the teachers noted more time on silent reading and other activities. It was also interesting to note that those supervisors who felt that their preferred instructional situations did not exist in their school ascribed this problem to teacher personalities. (HOD)

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THE CONGRUENCE OF CLASSROOM AND REMEDIAL READING INSTRUCTION

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Peter Johnston
Richard Allington
Peter Afflerbach

Reading Department
State University of New York at Albany
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222
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THE CONGRUENCE OF CLASSROOM AND REMEDIAL READING INSTRUCTION

Introduction

This paper addresses the nature of the relationship between the instruction provided in regular and remedial reading classes. Findings from interviews with administrators, reading teachers, classroom teachers and remedial reading students are reported. In these interviews we asked questions about the delivery of compensatory reading instruction (generally Title I remedial reading services) and their beliefs about effective practices in organizing compensatory instruction.

Recently, there has been a considerable amount of classroom based instructional research (e.g. Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979; Barr, 1982; Borg, 1980; Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Denham & Lieberman, 1980; Keisling, 1977-78). This research has provided relatively rich descriptions of effective reading instruction in the regular classroom. While there have also been some studies investigating remedial reading programs, this research has been somewhat less voluminous, and less descriptive of important curricular dimensions.

Much of the Title I literature reports "positive, but disappointingly small" achievement gains in large scale evaluations of the effectiveness of these remedial reading programs (Mullin & Summers, 1983; Vanecko, Ames & Archambault, 1980; Wang, Baer, Conklin, & Hoepfner, 1981). Several researchers who have attempted to identify effective practices through post-

hoc analyses (Archambault & St. Pierre, 1980; Wang, 1980) or descriptive/ethnographic studies (Dorr-Bremme, 1982) have been generally unsuccessful in pointing out specific instructional activities that consistently demonstrate positive correlations with achievement gains. Instead, these studies tend toward offering rather general program characteristics such as "effective leadership" as correlates of success.

Vanecko, Ames and Archambault (1980), for instance, defined "instruction" in terms of time allocated, instructor quality determined by specialized training and years of experience, group size based on reports of number of students in instructional groups, and expenditures drawn from reports of funding levels for compensatory instruction and the local core curriculum. In general their analyses of Title I programs' effectiveness indicated that the quality of instruction, as they defined it, produced favorable achievement results. However, these results offer only minimal descriptions of the content of instruction delivered in compensatory reading programs.

When it comes to the delivery of compensatory reading instruction, we think that there are some additional issues that need to be dealt with. These result from differences in the nature of the pupils and the instructional context, and from the fact that the students may receive instruction in the same subject area from more than one teacher, in more than one curriculum, and from more than one ideological base. Despite increased knowledge about instruction in one context or the other, as far as we can tell, there is little research concerning the issue of the interaction between the two.

Thus, little is known about the interaction of two instructional programs, although we have some theory-driven hypotheses.

We assumed that one way to maximize the net instructional outcome would be to insure that instruction in the two settings (regular and remedial classrooms) was congruent, that the tasks were directed towards the same ends. The same conclusion might be arrived at through Bloom's (1976) notion of "mastery learning", which may be thought of as a "one thing at a time" model. Bloom's model derives from Carroll's (1963) and, as such, emphasizes the importance of the availability of "time to learn". The idea is to work at a consistent set of objectives until they are mastered before proceeding to later objectives. Thus teacher and student are working toward a common, attainable goal.

The second reason for our assumption of curricular congruence relates to Downing's (1979) concept of "cognitive clarity" and Vernon's (1958) notion of "cognitive confusion". These writers claim that part of the problem of less able readers is that they do not have clear notions of the nature of the task and its demands. This type of problem could easily arise from a situation in which a student is regularly exposed to instruction in reading in two settings, each involving different goals and materials.

If different language controls operated on the texts used in the two different curricula, such as high versus low predictability (e.g. Bank Street Readers vs. Merrill Linguistic), or high frequency words versus words with high graphophonic regularity (e.g. Scott Foresman vs. Merrill Linguistic), then different reading strategies will be successful in the two situations.

Second, it seems likely that, rather than thoroughly learning and practicing a consistent set of strategies, non-parallel instruction would tend to produce less complete instruction in a wider variety of strategies, causing some to be lost and some to be distorted.

While some recent investigations have noted "interference" between compensatory program curriculums and local core curriculums, this is most often noted as a problem with the compensatory curriculum supplanting all or some of the local core curriculum (Kimborough & Hill, 1981; Vanecko, Ames, & Archambault, 1980). Some have noted "fragmentation" of the school experience from the multiple curricula with which the compensatory student is faced (Kaestle and Smith, 1982). However, the relationship between the classroom reading experience to the compensatory education experience seems to have been largely ignored. As Kaestle and Smith (1982) note in referring to the fragmentation of the school experience, "...we know of no studies which directly address this issue" (p. 400).

The research questions

The study, then, examined the relationship between local (classroom) core reading instruction and compensatory reading instruction. Administrators, reading teachers, classroom teachers and compensatory education students were interviewed. We employed this vertical perspective in order to incorporate the views of participants at various levels of the program. In these interviews we gathered information concerning the general question: what

degree of congruence exists in the instruction provided during core curriculum reading instruction and compensatory reading instruction?

In order to gather information from participants at different levels, our interview questions were necessarily different but always focused on eliciting information pertinent to resolving the major research question. The structure and content of the interviews is detailed in the next section.

Method

Subjects

In general, two students (first through eighth grade), their classroom teachers, their common reading teacher and a supervisor (often a principal), formed a cluster or interview set. The interview sets were formed around students who had returned signed parental permission slips to participate in the study. Three interview sets were incomplete, due to the various exigencies of field research. Thirty classroom teachers (CTs), 19 reading teachers (RTs), 33 students and 13 supervisors were interviewed. Teachers and supervisors were paid for their participation in the study. The schools that agreed to participate in the study were arbitrarily selected from rural and suburban districts in the central Michigan and central New York areas. A total of thirteen schools from ten school districts participated in the study.

The Interviews

Interviewing took place during and following regular school hours. Each participant in the survey was interviewed by one of the three authors.

The interviews consisted of open-ended probe questions which addressed various aspects of classroom and remedial reading programs. The questions were designed to overlap, so that three perspectives (student, classroom teacher, remedial reading teacher) were obtained on one day's work. Supervisor interviews, while not specifically probing the day's work, provided information about the administrative perspective on congruence. The complete interview questions are available from the authors.

Results

In order to investigate the congruence between the classroom and remedial room programs, we asked both teachers and specialists to describe their program in general. Then, teachers and specialists were asked about the program of a particular child who shared both teachers. First, we asked for descriptions of the instructional materials they used with the target child. The results show that 30 percent of the students worked on the same curricular materials in the two class settings. There were varying degrees of disparity between the materials encountered by the remaining students in the different situations. These differences ranged from basal series used in the regular class in conjunction with paperbacks used in remedial class, to Bankstreet readers in conjunction with Lippincott readers, or Scott Foresman readers in conjunction with Merrill readers.

Different basal reading materials are developed from different instructional ideologies. The result is that they differ in the rate of

introduction of new words, the nature of the words introduced (determined by frequency of use, grapho-phonic regularity, or presumed interest), the emphasis on silent or oral reading, relationship of pictures to text (in terms of information value), relationship of text structure to natural language patterns, predictability of text, and order of introduction of skills. In many instances these differences determine the manner and focus of instruction, divergent curricula precluding convergent instructional effort. Students frequently must learn quite different coping strategies in the two environments, and practice their reading skills on different sets of words and linguistic structures. To varying degrees, this was the case for 70% of our sample.

To further consider the congruence issue, we asked both sets of teachers about the goals of their instruction for the target children. These data are reported in Table 1. Again, while there is a fair degree of congruence between the goals (40%), there is also substantial incongruity (60 %). Reading teachers tended to report a greater emphasis on comprehension whereas classroom teachers emphasized decoding more. In assessing congruence of goals we looked for statements describing the skills, strategies, knowledge or behaviors the teachers were attempting to teach and justifications for these choices. Because the available research (Clark and Yinger, 1979; Clark, 1977; Duffy, 1982) indicates that teachers rarely develop explicit objectives-driven plans we did not expect a high degree of specificity in the responses. However, we did think that general areas of curriculum or behavior might be mentioned as goals for instruction. In fact, teachers were able to provide

such statements (e.g. "to develop independence in reading" or "mastery of vowel sounds"), but, more often than not (60% of the time), the classroom teacher and the reading teacher indicated quite different instructional goals for the same student on the same day. This lack of congruence in goals may sometimes be justifiable but our impression was that the two teachers were often simply working to different ends. It was apparent that regardless of the match or mismatch of materials used, the compensatory reading student was generally being provided reading instruction that was intended to produce different results in the two instructional settings.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

As noted above, we also examined the congruence issue through the students' perceptions of their reading programs. We were interested in knowing what they perceived to be the essence of their instruction in each situation, whether it was demanding, and what they thought the purpose of it was. Their perception of the instructional focus (most time spent) was shown in Table 2. These data allow several statements. First, there are substantial differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of what the students spend their time doing. Student reports frequently conflicted with those of the RT (57%) and with those of the CT (47%). For example, students claim to spend most time on workbooks and worksheets, whereas teachers claim that most time is spent on reading. This discrepancy may be caused by such things as the teachers' perceptions of the investigators preferences, or the children's perceptions of the amount of time being distorted by the arduousness of the

task.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Second, students appear to do more actual reading in the regular classroom than in the remedial classroom. Related to this, a third observation is that several children claimed to spend most time playing games. No teacher claimed this. This may have been caused by such factors as the teachers' social expectations, the children's interpretation of instruction as games, or the teachers' interpretation of games as instruction. Anecdotally, in one remedial class we observed, the children were playing scrabble. The teacher may have interpreted this as vocabulary instruction. At the same time, such efforts may have been blown out of proportion by the students as being more frequent than was actually the case.

A fourth observation is that remedial teachers generally claimed to emphasize silent reading and de-emphasize oral reading in contrast to the classroom teacher who claimed to emphasize both. While the children's judgments do not corroborate these claims, the claims are unexpected. In terms of sheer management, one would expect greater emphasis on silent rather than oral reading in the classroom. Oral reading would be simpler in the remedial classroom with the reduced number of students.

We asked students how much effort was involved in the two instructional settings. The majority of students felt that much effort was needed in

reading lessons in the regular classroom (58%), or in the remedial classroom (58%). However, only 64 percent of those who felt much effort was required in one setting, felt the same about the other setting. Some students thought that little effort was required in remedial classes (27%), or in their regular reading classes (21%).

We also inquired of students which activity they thought was most helpful to them in learning to read. Sixty-two percent of the students noted that reading books was the most helpful activity. Of these students, 19% specified silent reading and 14% specified oral reading as being most effective, one of these statements noting the benefit to be "so the teacher can see how I'm doing". Twenty-one percent of the students felt that vocabulary development was most helpful, and 12% favored workbooks and worksheets. One student commented that he found answering questions before reading stories was very useful, and another student noted the value of getting stickers for doing good work. Still another found cloze activities to be most useful. However, it was clear that the great majority felt that reading books was most helpful to them in furthering their progress.

A further issue investigated was the students' perceptions of the goals of instruction. This was addressed with the question "In what way do you think that (the activity most time was spent on in the last session) might help you to learn to read"? Children's statements were classified as clear, unclear or don't know. For example, "doing crossword puzzles is good; you can

fill in the rows..." was classified as unclear. The following two statements, on the other hand, were classified as clear: "When I use the tape recorder...I get to read long vowels" and "...I made mobiles, it didn't help." While the latter of these is unlikely to be congruent with the teacher's intention, it is nonetheless clearly goal related. The students' perceptions of the goals of instruction were in agreement with those expressed by the RT 16% of the time, and those expressed by the CT 29% of the time. Their perceived goals were often discrepant from those noted by the CT (45%) and the RT (47%). In general, then, the students were unaware of, or unable to clearly express, the purpose of the activities which they were spending most time on. This differed somewhat with age, suggesting that in the early stages they are perhaps hampered by lower expressive ability or by inability to figure out the purposes for themselves.

Our major concern for the student in noting the incongruities between curricula and goals, between both teachers' perceptions and between teachers' and students' perceptions was the potential for the development in the student of "cognitive confusion". The failure of students to perceive clear, task relevant goals can hinder learning, and particularly the generalization of learning. The generalization of a strategy occurs by the association of the behavior with a goal which is beyond the immediate situation or task (Feuerstein, 1980). Without a goal, it is also likely that children will find it a more difficult to detect their progress, since they will not know what to attend to.

Second, with divergent curricula, the strategies applicable in one setting will not always be applicable in the other. For example, we found children working with the Scott Foresman series in the classroom and with the Merrill Linguistic series in the remedial class. The Scott Foresman materials include many words which are not amenable to the decoding techniques taught in the Merrill series. Similarly, while the Scott Foresman texts emphasize (even demand) the use of context clues, the Merrill series is structured so as to make context clues of little help. A reader who is already struggling becomes caught in a situation in which it is not clear how best to attack a word. Strategies favored in one context fail in the second context. Barr (1972) has shown that the instructional emphasis (code-based vs. meaning-based) strongly influences the strategies used by less able readers. Thus, instruction in one situation may interfere with that in another, causing for the student a confusion over the nature of the task and the solution strategies.

Why might the reported instructional incongruity occur? We felt that congruence would possibly be related to the extent of the communication between CTs and RTs. We examined this in several ways. First, we asked the two sets of teachers when they last met about the specific student and for how long. Most distinguished between formal and informal meetings. There was exact agreement between the two sets of teachers on only 29 percent of occasions, the largest divergence in opinion being one month. However, the mean figures suggest that a good proportion of teachers (70 %) had met informally about the student in question for several minutes (mean=6.38 minutes) within the previous two weeks. Nevertheless, a substantial number of

teachers (30%) did not know when they last met. Responses to questions concerning formal meetings showed a different pattern. Only 27% of the teachers claimed to have had a formal meeting in the last two weeks, and 30% did not remember or had not met formally in the last three months. Agreement on the formal meeting was 19%. When asked whether they thought their present amount of contact was appropriate, 43 percent said that it was enough, 57 percent said they would like more, and none desired fewer meetings. However, there was little consistency between pairs on this issue. That is, 43 percent of the pairs conflicted on an optimal frequency for meetings to discuss students. This seemed to indicate some lack of communication.

Next, we asked CTs what text the child was reading in the classroom program, and what he or she thought the child was probably doing in the remedial program. The RT was asked to predict the probable classroom level, and describe the remedial program including remedial instructional materials. Thus, we took as a measure of communication, the extent to which the "left hand knew what the right hand was doing." Fifty percent of the time, RTs were unable to correctly identify the basal reading series used, and more than two-thirds could not identify the specific reader or level the remedial student used in the classroom. Eight percent of the RTs incorrectly identified the material while the remainder (32%) simply indicated they did not know the series used by the CTs (in 13% of the cases no reading series were used in the classroom). When asked to identify the specific book or level being used in the regular class, 60% of the RTs did not know, 8% were

incorrect, and 32% were accurate. CTs presented an even more extreme picture. Only 20% knew the series being used in the remedial class, and only 8% knew the exact book being used. Twenty percent guessed the series incorrectly, but most claimed not to know the series (60%) or the book (92%). It is clear that many teachers are unaware of the materials being used in the alternate part of the child's reading program.

These findings suggest that to a substantial degree, instructionally, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, and that lack of communication may be at the root of the problem. This lack of communication has been noted previously (Cohen, Intilli & Robbins, 1978; Finklestein, 1978). A potential basis for this lack of communication may lie in the fact that many compensatory reading programs were designed as seperate and additional programs. This administrative seperation seems, at times, to relieve the classroom teacher of the responsibility for ensuring that low-achieving children succeed, transferring this responsibility to the compensatory reading teacher. Since the locus of responsibility is no longer in the classroom there is little reason for the classroom teacher to seek out or even to maintain a close cooperative instructional relationship with the compensatory reading teacher (Kaestle & Smith, 1982). While we cannot identify the reason for the lack of communication between classroom and compensatory teachers, there is reason to believe that an open and cooperative instructional effort, which we rarely saw, does have positive effects (Cohen, Intilli & Robbins, 1978).

A further potential source of the discrepancy between programs may lie less in the lack of communication than in the instructional ideology underlying the programs. To investigate this aspect, we interviewed the supervisors of the program, to whom the reading teacher was responsible. Often this was the principal of the school.

When we interviewed these supervisors we asked what they thought the relationship between the classroom and remedial reading instruction should be. Among the twelve supervisors whom we interviewed, there was an even split on the question of whether remedial instruction should be congruent with and similar to the classroom program or whether remedial instruction should be quite different. Four felt that the instructional approach should be the same, four felt it should be substantially different, and four felt that the children needed some the same and some different. How did this turn out in actuality? We found that for those supervisors who believed in different instruction, 75 percent of their CT/RT pairs were providing different instruction. Those supervisors who believed that instruction should be similar had 60 percent of their CT/RT pairs complying. These results may explain some of the variations in program congruence identified since, most often, programs reflected supervisors stated beliefs about what relationship should exist between classroom and remedial programs.

We were not particularly surprised to find supervisors who believed that the remedial program should provide a different curricular approach than the classroom program. This view, in fact, seems to predominate in the

professional literature, particularly the literature dealing primarily with reading and learning disabilities. For instance, Gilliland (1974) states "Since these students have not learned to read as well as could be expected in the regular classroom, a different kind of reading instruction is needed". (p. 2: see also Cook and Earlly, 1979; Dechant, 1981; Stauffer, Abrams and Pikulski, 1978). This different approach assumption seems to flow from the "modality preference" hypothesis, and is, by and large, incompatible with the "time to learn" hypothesis. We would argue that there is little empirical support for the former (Allington, 1982) and a rather substantial empirical base supporting the latter (Borg, 1980; Fisher et al, 1980; Keisling, 1977-78), the "different approaches" philosophy has many proponents. Obviously a substantial proportion of the supervisors are either unaware of the "time to learn" hypothesis or have rejected it in favor of the more traditional "different approach" philosophy. These results may explain some of the variations in program congruence identified, since, most often, programs reflected supervisors stated beliefs about what relationship should exist between classroom and remedial programs.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the congruence between classroom and remedial reading programs. The motivation for this came from our belief that the goals and methods of reading instruction influence students learning strategies and their concept of what the learning is all about (e.g. Allington, 1983; Barr, 1972; Hiebert, 1983). In order for learners

to develop heuristic, or goal-directed strategies, they must have clear goals. We reasoned that if students were repeatedly confronted with conflicting goals and strategies, they would be unable to develop clear goals and strategies. Rather than "cognitive clarity" (Downing, 1979), they would be more likely to develop "cognitive confusion" (Vernon, 1958). For example, if a primary student is taught from the Bank Street Readers in regular class and from a Lippincott Reader in remedial class, there may well be a problem. The context based strategies insisted upon in the regular class simply will not work with the materials used in remedial class. Indeed, the student must learn two distinctly different concepts of "reading".

We set out to determine the extent of any disparity between classroom and remedial programs. We encountered a full range of contrasts, and we found a frequent lack of congruence between the regular class and remedial class settings. Possible causes for the lack of congruence were considered. First, one third of the supervisors interviewed believed that the lack of congruence was appropriate. Their reasoning was basically "It didn't work the one way, so we may as well try another". However, such an argument suggests the need for a different instructional approach in <u>both</u> situations rather than just one. If a different approach or different curriculum is needed on order for learning to proceed efficiently, then that alternative methodology should be adhered to in the classroom, as well as in the remedial program. It would seem that employing different curricula in the remedial program provides only half a solution, at best. At worst, it may make learning more difficult for the less able reader. The alternative hypothesis for the reading failure, that some

children require more "time to learn", requires congruence between curricula.

A second possible reason for the lack of congruence may well lie in the extent of communication between classroom teachers and remedial teachers. A wide range of frequency of communication was evident in the teachers' reports. More telling, however, was the lack of awareness of many teachers about the materials that the child was working with in the other instructional setting. This lack of awareness was prevalent not only for the specific book or level the child was on, but for the series that was used in the other class. Furthermore, the frequent conflict in goals between teacher pairs working with the same child seemed likely to produce substantial difficulties for the child attempting to make sense of his instruction in reading. The students' comments tended to reflect a lack of awareness of the purpose of the activities in which they were required to participate. While some were able to make a clear statement about this, it was virtually never a functional relationship which was expressed. Without a clear and consistent goal, it seems difficult to develop any goal-directed strategies. A few children did, however, note that the activities which they spent most time in did not seem to be especially functional for them.

As a methodological note, in line with Hook and Rosenshine's (1979) findings on the lack of reliability in teacher reports of certain aspects of their teaching, we found that student-teacher dyads, and teacher-teacher dyads, showed considerable disagreement on certain information. For example, in estimating the elapsed time since the previous meeting to discuss a particular

child, teachers estimates differed by up to one month. Children's perceptions of what they spent most time doing often differed considerably from what their teachers perceived. The children noted more time on workbooks or worksheets, whereas the teachers noted more time on silent reading and other, perhaps more laudable, activities. Some potential explanations for this have been noted above, and relate to task arduousness making time seem longer, and to the low social desirability of "dittoes".

It is interesting to note that those supervisors who felt that their preferred instructional situations did not exist in their school ascribed this problem to teacher personalities. The reading teacher or classroom teacher was seen as "rigid" or "inflexible". With such comments, one must have concern over the nature of the teacher development program within the school system. If administrators and teachers feel that way about one another, there may be little likelihood of change occurring.

The next step is to do an extensive study of the congruence issue in which a variety of data are collected. The interview data obtained in this study need to be buttressed by direct observational data (Hook and Rosenshine, 1979), and to make progress toward a causal argument, achievement data need to be collected.

Table 1: Goals of Instruction

Goal	Classroom Teacher	Remedial Teacher
comprehension	6	12
decoding	9	6
fluency	2	3
vocabulary	2	1
affect	6	3
behavior	4	1
independence	-	2
other	1	2

Table 2: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Most Frequently Assigned Activity

	Classroom Teacher	Remedial Teacher	Student (in regular class)	Student (in remedial class)
silent reading	12	15	9	4
oral reading	11	4	6	3
worksheets, workbooks	4	4	10	11
vocabulary	2	2	1	-
word games	-	-	1	4
answering questions	-	-	-	3
writing	-	1	-	1
mixture	1	4	-	-
other	-	-	4	2
don't know	-	-	-	1

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